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The  
Songs  
42

# PSALMS - The SONGS

Forty-two

Despair of Soul? Hope in God!

## READ AND OBSERVE

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to the LORD, or God, including all pronouns and synonyms, with a red triangle.

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to the psalmist, including all pronouns and synonyms, with a blue capital "R+".

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to the psalmist's soul with a blue capital "S".

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to despair or disturbed, along with all synonyms, with a brown tear drop.

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to a geographical place with orange brackets.

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to enemies, along with all pronouns and synonyms, with an orange capital "W".

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every reference to time with a blue box.

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every comparison with a pink equal sign.

Read through **Psalm 42** and mark every contrast with a pink diagonal line.

Read through **Psalm 42** and divide the passage into the following segments. Mark and title these segments in your text using brackets in the margin.

1. In tears—I am without You
2. In despair—I am far from You
3. In oppression—I hope in You

## READ AND ANSWER

### Psalm 42:1-4

What comparison does the psalmist make in the first verse?

Why would a deer need to pant for the water brooks?

Does a deer pant for the water brooks because he has a fondness for water or because he has not been in the vicinity of water brooks and is in need of it for his very life?

Why does the psalmist's soul pant for the presence of God?

Is this verse expressing the psalmist's great love for God? Or is it saying that the psalmist has not been in the presence of God and acknowledges this as his greatest need? (Hint: Read the entire **Psalm** once more taking special note of **verses 1** through **4.**)



Point of Depth

The Hebrew word for “soul” is *nephesh* which refers to a breathing creature.

What does the psalmist's soul thirst for?

How is God described?

What rhetorical question does the psalmist ask?

If the psalmist is longing to come and appear before God, where do you think he is?  
(Or where can you assume he is “not”?)

Where did the Israelites appear before God?

While the psalmist has been away from Jerusalem and the temple of God, what does he say has been his food day and night?

Why?

What are those around him saying?

Why are those around him asking him where his God is?

What things does the psalmist remember?

Why does the psalmist pour out his soul within him?

What did the psalmist used to do in his past?

1.

2.

Who was this throng?

To where did the procession always lead?

In contrast to his present emotional state, what were the psalmist's emotions at that time?

1.

2.

What were the psalmist and the multitude doing?

**Psalm 42:5-8**

To whom or what is the psalmist speaking in **verse 5**?

What does the psalmist ask his soul?

1.

2.

How does he encourage his soul?

1.

2.

3.

We have now seen the state of mind of the psalmist toward his God in his present, his past, and his future. What was the state of mind of the psalmist toward his God in his past? (**Psalm 42:4**)

What is the emotional state of the psalmist toward his God in the present? (**Psalm 42:1-3**)



The Hebrew word for “despair” is *shachach* and is a primitive root which means to sink or depress.

The Hebrew word for “disturbed” is *hamah* and is a primitive root which means to make a loud sound, to be in great commotion or tumult, to rage, war, moan, or clamor.

What does the psalmist believe his state of mind toward his God will be in the future?  
(Psalm 42:5)

How does he believe he will go from the state he is in to one of praising God?

Who does he believe will accomplish it?

What does he believe will help in the process?



The Hebrew word for “help” is *yeshuwah* and has the idea of something being saved. It means saving acts, salvation, deliverance, aid, victory or prosperity.

It comes from an Arabic root that has the idea of making something wide or sufficient so as not to cause oppression or distress. It carries the concept that there are no restrictions. In moving from distress to safety deliverance is required, usually from outside the entity which needs to be saved. The one who brings the deliverance is known as the savior.

Is it not amazing that this is the word from which our dear Savior’s Name, Jesus, comes?

In **verse 5**, the psalmist spoke to his soul. To Whom does the psalmist speak in **verse 6**?

What does the psalmist tell his God?

The second line in **verse 6** starts off with the word, “therefore”. What is the “therefore” there for?

What lines does the “therefore” connect?

What does the psalmist remember?

What does it mean that he remembers his God from the land of the Jordan? Where is he? (Look it up on a Bible map.)

What does it mean that he remembers his God from Mount Mizar in the peaks of Hermon? Where is he? (Look it up on a Bible map.)

According to your Bible map, how are the Jordan and Mount Mizar in the peaks of Hermon related geographically?

Whether **verse 6** is saying that David (or whoever the psalmist is) is remembering God and something God did in the land of the Jordan and the mountains of Hermon, or if it is saying that the psalmist is remembering God while he is sojourning in the land of the Jordan and the mountains of Hermon, what is it that he remembers?

What calls to what at the sound of God’s waterfalls? (Sorry, I know that is an awkward question. Basically I am asking you to try and figure out what the first line of **verse 7** is describing.)

Is it a good thing in regard to the psalmist?

What about breakers and waves rolling over him? Does that sound like a positive thing or a negative thing?



**Jonah 2:3**

***For You had cast me into the deep,  
Into the heart of the seas,  
And the current engulfed me.  
All Your breakers and billows passed over me.***

What is being described in **verse 7**?

What does God command in **verse 7**?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What does God command in **verse 8**?

What does the psalmist have the ability to do during the night?



**The Hebrew word for “deep” is *thowm*  
and means abyss.**

**It comes from a word that means deep, depths, or deep places  
and usually refers to a massive body of water.**

**Let’s think through this verse a bit...**

**Whoever the psalmist is, he is desperate to be in God’s presence once again.  
For whatever reason, he does not have access to Jerusalem and the temple  
where the congregation praises God together publicly.**

**Wherever the psalmist is, he has enemies who mock him all day long.**

**He is in despair and his soul is deeply disturbed within him.**

**Yet, despite his situation and his seemingly hopeless situation,  
he is determined to walk by faith.  
He addresses himself and says,  
“Don’t think about the things that have caused despair.  
Instead, hope in God!  
Remember the truth!  
God will eventually usher me into His presence once again!  
I will praise God alongside of His people once again!”**

**But almost immediately after talking truth to himself  
his emotions return and this time, he talks to God!  
He cries out his pain to his God and tells him what he is doing to counteract it.  
He is saying, “I’m really trying, God! I am thinking on truth about You.  
But my soul is still in despair! What more can I do? Help me!”**

**Now he gives God a word picture of the situation as he sees it.  
He says, “Trouble after trouble is knocking me over and drowning me!”  
He feels like he is in the middle of the ocean being hit by breaker after breaker,  
wave after wave, with no hope of returning safely to the shore!**

**Whether the psalmist is referring to the ocean, such as was the case with Jonah,  
or whether he is referring to the surging body of water at the bottom of one of  
God’s waterfalls on one of the mountains of Hermon, we don’t know for sure.  
Either way, we see the picture of his never-ending turmoil.**

**But notice that the psalmist is aware that God is in control during it all—  
He says, “Your waterfalls, Your breakers, and Your waves”.  
He knows God is in control  
and that is what enables him to speak with such confidence in his very next line.**

**Verse 8 acknowledges the control God has over His waters  
by expressing his conviction that God will also command His lovingkindness.  
He knows the LORD will sustain him through every breaker during the light of day,  
and give him the ability to sing during the gloom of night.**

What type of song does the psalmist sing? (Remember to get your answer from the context.)

Is there a reason, from the context of this **Psalm**, for the psalmist to sing a song? (Hint: Although we don't know who the psalmist is for sure, we do know something about what he did in Jerusalem.)

Who does the psalmist sing his song/prayer to?

What does he call his God?

How does the fact that the psalmist calls His LORD "the God of my life" connect to what is happening to the psalmist?



**It is interesting to think about the psalmist's situation...**

**He is far away from home—his beloved Jerusalem and the temple of his God  
and he is beset with depression because of it.  
Enemies in this foreign place mock him all day long.**

**What a privilege to see his extraordinarily faithful response to it all...**

**Wherever he is, he longs to come home to Jerusalem.  
He desires to lead the throngs in procession to the house of God.  
He yearns to joyfully sing,  
thanking His God with the multitude during the festivals.**

**He is desperate to be in the presence of his God  
and worship Him corporately  
but he is in exile and cannot attend the festivals.**

**He cries out to his God and delivers his heart's cry...  
But his situation does not change...**

**Ultimately faith breaks through... and remembering the LORD's lovingkindness,  
he determines to perform his worship,  
though it seems in solitary confinement,  
in the very place of his exile!  
The refugee takes up his instrument—his God-given voice—  
and prays to the God of his life from his land of exile!**

**Psalm 42:9-11**

What does the psalmist call his God?

What does the psalmist say to God? (Hint: This won't be a true list; just try and break out the four points.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Why is the psalmist mourning? (Be careful to get your answer from the context of the entire **Psalm**.)

Why is the enemy oppressing him?

How are the enemies oppressing him?

How does being reviled by enemies "feel" to the psalmist?

What are the psalmist's enemies saying to him all day long?

Why are they asking him where His God is? (Hint: Why has the psalmist been weeping day and night?)

To whom or what is the psalmist speaking in **verse 11**?

What question does the psalmist ask his soul?

1.

2.

What answer does the psalmist give to his soul?

What does the psalmist believe his state of mind toward his God will be in the future?

How does he believe he will go from the state of mourning to one of praising God?

Who does he believe will accomplish it?

Why can he tell his soul to hope in God?

Why does he believe he will be able to praise God again?

1.

2.

What does he believe will help in the process?

Have you seen the words of **verse 11** before?

Where?

Are they identical?

What is different about them?



**Psalm 42:5 and Psalm 42:11 are almost identical.  
The only difference is found in the wording of their fourth lines  
(the words “again” and “yet” in the third lines are the same Hebrew word).**

**Psalm 42:5**

*Why are you in despair, O my soul?  
And why have you become disturbed within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him  
For the help of His presence.*

**Psalm 42:11**

*Why are you in despair, O my soul?  
And why have you become disturbed within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,  
The help of my countenance and my God.”*

**I think it is very interesting and very revealing  
that the psalmist has twice talked himself out of his own depression.  
It seems that he had convinced his soul to have hope in verse 5.  
But it also seems that his soul slipped back into despair soon after.**

**The triumph does not come in lasting cessation from the depression,  
rather it comes from the psalmist’s repeated embrace of truth.  
His faith continues...  
no matter what...**

**When the darkness of despair closes in on him,  
he chooses to remind himself of the truth about his God.  
And each time...  
it is sufficient...**

## **READ AND REASON**

Do you have any idea who this psalmist is?

Could it be David?

Was David ever barred from Jerusalem?

Was David involved in the music for the house of God?

Hmmm... Could be...

Or...

Could he be a Levite who was a temple singer?  
Why might he have been exiled from Jerusalem?  
Hmmm... Could be...

Or...

Could this be the righteous remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation?  
Could this be from post-Solomonic times when there was no temple?  
Hmmm... Could be...

Thankfully, knowing who the psalmist is with certainty is not a requirement for understanding what God is showing us in **Psalm 42**. Perhaps not knowing who the psalmist is actually makes it easier for us to slip ourselves into the place of the psalmist, thereby gaining a deeper insight into what true hope in God acts like. Perhaps this is partly what what God had in mind?

Before we end our observation of **Psalm 42**, take a quick read-through of **Psalm 43**. Notice any similarities?

**Psalm 42** doesn't really end here... does it?

**Psalm 42** and **Psalm 43** used to be sung as one **Psalm**. Although they are separate they remain side by side, because **Psalm 42** doesn't really end here... does it?

See you in **Psalm 43**!

 Segment by Segment

Try titling these segments yourself.  
Ask God to help you.

**Verses 1-4**

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**Verses 5-8**

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~ Purpose of Psalm 42

**Try to identify the purpose of Psalm 42.  
The purpose simply states “why the Psalmist wrote the Psalm”.**

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~ Theme of Psalm 42

**Try giving Psalm 42 a title by identifying its theme.  
The theme simply states “what the Psalm is about”.**

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